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OF

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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PRAYER FOR OTHERS.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."—I. TIM. II., 1, 2.

You will see the compass of the apostle's thought of prayer in the multiplication of terms. "Supplications," "prayers," "intercessions," "giving of thanks"—these are all phrases which cover the ground of prayer. Some of them include certain elements more emphatically than others; but taken together they indicate a desire that every form of prayer with which one may be exercised should be uttered by Christian men for themselves. For themselves? Yes, surely—though exhortation to that was scarcely needed. Not only, however, for themselves, but for all men. The whole word of God abounds in exhortations to prayer in our own behalf; but the special command or exhortation here, is, that we should employ every form of prayer, not for ourselves, but for others, without exception. The only classification that is here given is for all men, and all those who stand exalted above the ordinary level in a representative character. This classification includes the whole human family—men and their officers, kings, magistrates, all in authority. Praying thus is called *intercessory prayer*, or *interceding in behalf of others*. We have eminent instances of it, not to go back to the prophets, in the example of our Lord—instances which are recorded of prayer by him. We find that in the most affecting of those instances the strength of prayer was expended in asking mercies, not for himself, but for others.

If you look into the writings of his disciples, so far as there was an authentic record of them, you shall find that they were accustomed to pray for others, and to exhort their fellow men to do the same. This stands out in the history of Paul more eminently than in that of any of the other apostles. He ceases not to make mention of others in his prayers. In every single one of his letters, almost, and often many times in each, he takes notice of his habit of praying

SUNDAY MORNING. March 3, 1872. Lesson JOHN XVII. Hymns, (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 255, 127.

for those whom he has known—for churches, for individuals, for households, for friends. His life seems to have been one great breath of supplication or intercession for all toward whom his heart yearned, or with whom he had labored.

We may well suppose that that which was manifest in the example of the Lord, and that which the disciples, doubtless, took from his example, was eminently acceptable before God. We are apt to leave out of our thought, in prayer, the personality of God. We are apt to forget that he acts upon the same general laws, though upon a higher scale, than we do.

If men come to us asking always ignoble things, things low down, at last in our thoughts we stamp them, we rank them, as low. If they come only asking for bodily relief, and always in the same way; if they come asking for something to eat, something to wear, and nothing else, we very soon call them beggars, paupers. If they are accustomed to go a step higher, and come to us, not asking for something to eat or to wear, but giving indication that they have need in their own affections, and soliciting from us some counsel, some advice, some comfort, then they rise in our estimation. And if they ask still higher things, until we find them at the same range of thought upon which we are, and see them to be open to the same influences of honor and manliness which impel us, we feel that there is a kind of fellowship existing between them and us. The things which men think of when they come to us, and which they want, determine very much our feelings toward them.

Do you not suppose that it is the same in the bosom of God? If a man is always praying from the lowest plane of his life, from his physical want; if he forgets all of the Lord's Prayer except, "Give us this day our daily bread," do you not suppose that his prayers rank very low? Or, if he prays from fear; if he prays from the lower forms of desire; if he prays from aspiration;—do you not suppose that the level of his prayer is recognized, and that the divine sympathy bears some proportion to the line on which he stands? If a man approach the throne of grace from day to day more and more praying from aspiration, hungering and thirsting after righteousness; nay, if he approach it with a longing for fellowship with God; nay, if he go to God forgetting himself, and filled with a generous ardor for others; nay, if he stand on that very plane where God himself lives, saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," do you not suppose that he is nearer to God than he could possibly be when giving utterance to the lower forms of prayer?

An intercessory prayer is a prayer of generosity—a prayer of unselfishness. We are permitted, not to be selfish, but to have selfness

in prayer; yet if persons think only of themselves, and of themselves in their lower relations, they of necessity can only touch the outer part, the hem, of the garment of God. They who draw near to his bosom, they who enter into fellowship with him, must needs be those whose minds and hearts are moving in the same direction that his mind and heart move. For God's thoughts rank men. Though we may go to him with everything, yet our habit of going will determine what part of our lives we are living in. And we shall be more like God if we pray generously for others than if we pray simply for ourselves. Many people fall into a very narrow and selfish habit of prayer. Without doubt they would obtain more for themselves, and would go away bearing ampler blessings, if they could only, when they approach the throne of God in prayer, introduce this divine element of sympathy for others.

There are some respects in which we may be benefited by a consideration of this subject; and it will bear further inspection and examination.

A habit of praying for others, as I have already said, keeps our minds on a higher plane than does always thinking about our own selves. It is true that our primary duties are to our own households; but take two housekeepers, one of whom is thinking kindly of all her friends and all their households, who is discharging every duty toward her children, and toward the members of her own family, but who every day contrives somehow to steal an hour in which she can go out on some errand of mercy— and another one who thinks of nobody but herself, or of no household but her own, and who never goes forth on any errand of mercy—between two such persons as these, is there not a very marked moral difference? Does not the public sentiment of the neighborhood place the one who is thinking of others' interests, not to the exclusion of her own duties at home but in addition to them, upon a higher plane than the other who thinks only of herself? Does not the public sentiment regard her as the nobler character of the two?

So it is throughout the sentient universe. The things which are true in our low moral appreciation are not less true in the higher sphere, but more gloriously and more amply true. Praying for others increases in you those compassions and kindnesses toward men which society needs in every part. There is yet much rude and savage nature left among men. There is much of the forest and the wilderness yet left in society. Men are crowded together; they are jostling each other; they are treading upon each other; they are snatching from each other. The law of strength and the law of cunning, which is the law of the wilderness, is yet strong among

us. We are accustomed to look upon men in the great strifes and struggles of human society with indifference. We think of them as "the crowd." We speak of them as "the mass," "the rabble," or "the common people." We think of them as we do of flocks of birds, without individualizing them; without specializing their wants and temptations and trials; without bringing ourselves into personal relations with them. They are mere animated facts before us. We look upon the great mass of people who are coming and going before us merely as "a crowd." When you stand at the ferry, and look through and see twelve hundred people pouring off from the boat at evening, what do you think of them? You think of them as "twelve hundred people." You say, "How they weigh down the boat! What a mass of men! How much this Company must make!" You stand and look upon men, women and children, every soul of whom has a great drama playing in his nature—burdens, sorrows, fears, anxieties, sympathies, all that goes to make up humanity—every one of whom bears a ticket for eternity, and you say, "What a crowd!" Or, if you individualize them at all, it is largely by the question as to who is handsome, and who is not handsome; or, who is well dressed, and who is plainly dressed; or, who belong to the upper circles, and who to the lower classes. All that God sees in this mass of men we are apt, by reason of the films which society puts upon our eyes, to lose sight of. We fail to see the manhood in the masses of human beings.

It is a bad thing for men to live, and grow up, and call themselves Christians, and form the habit of looking at the great mass of men and seeing nothing in them but their physical constitution and external relations. And the habit of praying for men brings back the manhood to your thought and sympathy and heart in such a way as to lead you to imagine their history, and to feel for them with a true-hearted interest.

As we look at men without individualizing them, we are apt to think of them as so many forces without attributes. We see them working, delving, earning, achieving. They are to us very much like rains, like winds, like laws of nature. They are like machines, going up and down through life. They *are* these things; but these things are the very lowest parts of what they are. And it is not becoming in Christian men whose horizon has been enlarged and illuminated by the revelation of the life beyond, to look only thus upon their fellow men.

We are apt to imbibe even contempt for men, by seeing the vulgar side of human life. That side we cannot hide. In the imperfections of men, in their manifold failings, it is impossible but

that we should see much that is rude, much that is unlovely. And the sight is a bad one because it hardens the heart.

It is dangerous to look upon the weak side of men. Anything is dangerous to your manhood which takes your sympathy away from your fellow men, and makes your heart hard toward them. It is very difficult for one to have a keen sense of right and wrong, a high appreciation of what is pure and good, a full understanding of what is true, and simple, and genuine, and sincere, and then go out among men, and see how many disguises they wear, how much deception they practice, how much hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious, there is about them, how much they are tangling themselves up with falsenesses, how much is superficial, how much is the result of fashion or custom, how much is upheld by law and public sentiment, and how little by their own rectitude, how poor, meager, low, shallow the common people are, and how vulgar and sinful much of life is.

This is especially true of those who are accustomed to see men under pressure of temptation, under the influence of their passions, or in their hours of weakness and trouble. It is not possible for a man to be much among men, and see all their infelicities, without, I had almost said, having a misanthropic spirit bred in him, unless he sees them as a physician sees men that are sick. A physician does not despise men because he sees them diseased and ghastly and loathsome. He goes to them with a spirit of humanity. He goes to heal them. He sympathizes with their suffering and pain. And when he has healed them, and their past weakness has given place to present strength, he rejoices over their health.

What we need is to have such sympathy with men that every day we shall carry their cases before God, and look at their vulgarities in the light of God's pity, and not in the light of our own contempt and cynical criticism. We are apt to look at men who are unfortunate in life, and who look to us for sympathy and help, as running at right angles to the path of our interest. We are apt to regard those whom we meet in the conflicts of business, and whose affairs tend somewhat to interrupt the even flow of ours, as our enemies. Those who do not damage our thrift or lessen our chances, we are apt to look good-naturedly upon; but those who do, we are apt to look critically, and even severely, upon. We make our own selfish interests, unconsciously, it may be, the judgment-throne, the judge's bench; and we sit upon that as upon a chair of justice, to determine what men are. We try them and condemn them. Faults which in our children we consider excusable, in our rivals we treat as unforgivable. We look upon those who are bad in spots, who

have faults here and there, but who speak well of us, and play upon our love of praise and self-conceit, as on the whole a good deal better than common men. We say of them, "They may have some imperfections; but, after all, they are very excellent fellows. There are a great many good things about them." We speak of them in a general excusatory tone. Whereas, the men who lie close upon us, and seem to be dividing the spoils with us—how critically do we look upon them! How sharp are we in our observations concerning them! How severe are we in our strictures upon them!

Now, if we were accustomed to take these men out of their strifes, and then look at them; if we were accustomed to look at them, not in those of their relations where our selfishness goes, but in their larger relations; if we thought of them as having the heart-ache as we have it; if when we saw them doing wrong in life, instead of denouncing them, we asked, "Who were their father and mother? What chance had they when they started in life? Why are they distorted thus?" if we knew their history, we should have more reason for pitying than for blaming them.

A man in his business relations is stingy and grasping; and he seems to you unlovely and hateful. But you do not know what that love may be at home which is inspiring him to such intense industry and such closeness. You do not see the strife that is going on within him to make him what he is.

Is it not better, therefore, that we should measure those about us, whether they be rivals or companions, as God does, than that we should measure them as men do—and that, too, in their lowest moods of mind? As there are none so good that they are without faults, so there are none so bad that they are without excellencies. The low are not so low, and the high are not so high, as we are apt to think. At any rate, if instead of indulging in suspicions, and envyings, and jealousies, and raillery toward men whom we meet as physical forces in life, we took them and lifted them up into a calmer atmosphere, and looked at them as immortal beings, and prayed for them, it would exalt our appreciation of humanity, and take away that canker and rust which we are apt to see upon them when we only see their wicked dispositions as they are exhibited in the toils and vexations of life.

We see the mistakes of men; we see their insincerities; we see their sins (for who is there that has not sins?); and we despise and hate them. So, often, we throw ourselves into a more wicked state of mind than they are in, whom we hate. It is possible for a man to despise a thief with a despising that is wickeder in the sight of God than the stealing is in the thief. It is possible for you to

look upon an outcast with a spirit of cold reprehension, with a spirit of revulsion, and of horror, that God will condemn as a higher misdemeanor, morally, than the course that you despise.

It was this very hating of men on account of their ignorance and faults that brought out Christ's terrible denunciations against the Scribes and Pharisees. It was not because they had all the faults that common men were subject to; it was because, in their elevation above their fellow men, in their intellectual superiority, and in their high moral state, they cut themselves loose from their fellow men, and did not care for them. It was because they abhorred men's weaknesses and sins in such a way that men were substantially cut out from the sphere of their sympathy. Nothing can be more wicked than this. It may not be in our power to succor men. It may not be safe to throw our households open to them. It may be that this or that reason will practically limit our ability to reach them. But there is no man that can take up his fellow men wherever he can find them, in a spirit of prayer before God, without having an enlarged and better thought of them.

If, as we walked the street, we had prayers, winged desires, that we could fit to every man we met, we should very soon feel a difference in our habit of looking upon men. This has sometimes been carried to a ludicrous extent, as where Cotton Mather says, "When I see a tall man, I say, 'God grant that he may be tall in grace,' and when I see a short man, I say, 'God grant that his faults may be as short as his stature.'" You may carry it to the extreme, and spoil the thought; but it would be a gracious thing if we could clothe men in some such way with kind wishes.

How beautiful it is to relieve the troubles of men, to heal their sorrows, to cleanse their defilements, to build up their households, by external means! but if we cannot do that, how beautiful still is it to seek the promotion of their welfare by prayers and yearnings in their behalf! How it would enlarge the bountifulness of our selfish natures if we prayed for men whenever we saw that they were in need; if, for instance, when a man passed by us who we saw was proud, we should make supplication that God would give him the jewel of humility; or if, seeing that he was insincere, we should pray that God would open the light of truth to him! How much better would it be, if, having a sense of men's infirmities, we had a feeling of pitifulness and yearning toward them! How much better would it be for them and for you if you were in the habit of praying for all men.

Much is said about the "fellowship of the saints." How little fellowship there is! We live in life very much as men do in prisons,

where each is confined in his own cell, and is separated from all those around about him by a stone wall. He may, by certain signs, by rappings upon the wall, communicate a little with his fellow prisoners; but how much can men learn of the thoughts and feelings of others in that way? There are histories going on in human souls which angels behold, but of which men are not spectators. Every man is subject to inward trials and struggles of which his fellow men know little or nothing. What unwritten histories have men, of which we are ignorant! How much God sees in men, that is hidden from us! And how much more humane should they be toward their fellow men who have risen to a contemplation of them from the stand-point of their merciful Judge—their loving Saviour!

The habit of praying for men tends, also, to increase our patience and our tender helpfulness toward them, and prepares us for just thoughts concerning them. It is a matter which it seems to me none of us enough insist upon—the justice not only of our language, but of our thoughts. There is many a man who would not smite his neighbor with his fist, but who smites him unmercifully with his thoughts. There is many a man who would not pierce a fellow man with an instrument in his hand for all the world, but who does not hesitate to pierce him and wound him to the very quick with his thoughts. There are many of us who would not on any account let a secret be torn from our lips concerning another, but who inwardly slander that other, judging him severely, remorselessly. In the court-room of our own secret souls, we condemn men unheard. We argue their case, and they have no chance to make plea in return. We sit there to accuse them, and make our accusation, and reason upon it; and if there be any pleading, our vanity, our pride, our interest leads us to plead against them. And there is no one to answer in their behalf. A great soul, methinks, should be more careful of his thoughts than of his actions; for laws, customs, institutions, for the most part, help us to take care of our actions toward our fellow men. Our language, the outward registration of what we think and feel, is very much under the control of the influences which surround us. And if we are Christian men, we will see to it that that inside, silent hall of judgment, the soul, is regulated according to the most scrupulous honor, and conscience, and manhood, and sympathy. Nor do I know of any other way in which this can be so well done as by the habit of praying for others. Now we grumble at men; we find fault with them; we complain of them; we are forever seeing where they do not fit, and caring very little where they do. How much better would it be for them and for us if it were our practice,

on noticing in them some defect, to lift our thought to their immortality; if we were to see them as they are to be; if we were to imagine them cleansed from their faults; if we were to look upon them as they will stand in our Father's house; if we were to recognize them as our immortal brethren! There would not be so much need of homilies and sermons on charity if we were in the habit of praying for all men, with "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks."

Having, then, considered the duty, more particularly, of praying for all men, let us specialize. We naturally pray for our children first. We remember them in our family prayer. And how much better it is, in praying for them, to follow out the line of their disposition, and, as it were, to bathe our affection for them in the heavenly atmosphere! How much more beautiful they will be to us! How much dearer our attachment to them will be! How much finer and smoother will be the thread which binds our hearts to them! How much nobler our hope respecting them will be! How much larger will be the sphere in which they live in connection with us! If we are accustomed from day to day to bear our children in prayer to God, there is nothing that can equal in richness the love with which we cherish them.

In this matter, we limit very much the uses of prayer, if we pray simply that God will convert our children. The desire is a very noble one; but, after all, the things which are flowing out from our children's minds day by day—their fancies; their budding imaginations; their incipient reasonings; their dull moral sense, or their acute moral sense; all the things which make them special as related to others; their characteristics—these may well be brought, as subjects of either supplication or thanksgiving, before their God, and our God.

And how dear to us will our children seem when we shall from day to day have brought them into God's presence, that he may look upon them—when we shall have gone back to his house, as it were, with our children!

One of the most interesting and memorable experiences of life is seen when the child has gone away from his father's house, and has instituted a family of his own, and is blessed with children, and for the first time goes back to his father and mother with those children. No poem has ever told what the heart says then. No picture has ever drawn out what takes place then. No philosophy has ever analyzed that inside history. Ten millions have felt it, but none have been able to express it. Only prayer can do that.

When we go back to our Heavenly Father, once and often, with

our children in the highest relations which are possible, how sacred and beautiful they become!

Then I think we ought to pray for our associates and our friends, not in the general way alone. General good wishes are not without their use; but special prayers are needful. I do not think that we sufficiently search out and know our friends. We are accustomed to take the measure of men, and of their relations, too much from their connection with physical things. We are apt to judge of men by their standing on the street; by their effectiveness; by their honesty and reliableness one with another; by their scholarship, and their standing as related to scholars; by what they have done, and what they promise to do. We specialize, we partialize, we limit, our conception of men. But no man is known to you until you put him in a place where you can see the whole of him, and where you can see, also, the prophecy of that which he is to become. And that is the point of prayer.

When you pray for men, you never pray for them as farmers, as merchants, as mechanics, as bankers, as engineers, as drivers. You never pray for them as clerks, or confidential clerks. You drop all that which concerns their occupation. You pray for their manhood. You pray for them as you would think of them at a funeral. You pray for them as you see them in the light of eternity. You pray for them as in the presence of God.

We love to take photographs of our friends by the natural sun, and carry them with us; and a man, having such a likeness, says, "I have a true picture: the sun does not lie." And how much better it is for you to take spiritual photographs of your friends, from the Sun of righteousness, and bear with you that inward resemblance which God will give to you when you think of them in the hour of prayer, at the footstool of divine mercy! How much larger a sense it will give of the richness and value of those who are around about you! Then you will be able to think of men somewhat as they think of themselves in their best moments.

We are to pray for all that are despised. It is wholesome that from day to day we should send our mercies out, as it were. I is wholesome that we should have something to compare our lot with. As sweet is better to our taste when we have taken something sour; so joy is better for having the touch of sorrow near to it. In proportion as we are prospered and strong, we need not to forget the hole or the pit from which we were dug. One of the worst things connected with prosperity is, that it tends to separate men from their companions in affliction; to make them feel that they have come into circumstances where they do not need others.

There is an unfortunate word which expresses this—namely, *independence.* A man is apt to feel that when he has prospered he is independent in his circumstances. The worst thing in the world for a man is to be consciously independent of his fellow men. He who comes to a point where he does not think that he needs others, or that they need him, so that he is cut off from them, is in a deplorable state. Like a bough severed from a tree, or a tree severed from its root, is a man who, being prospered, feels that he is independent of others. He is cut away from the great tree of human society.

We are to pray for all those who are in peril and distress; for all those who are shut up in various ways. Prayer for such people keeps alive pity. It deepens humanity. It more and more swells in our bosom that godlike spirit by which all helpfulness is issued through all the universe.

Then we are to pray for our enemies. That duty is made special. It is made one of the fundamental evidences of the relationship of God himself. God is one who forgives those who forget him or remember him only to resist his will and defy his authority. He "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And he says to us, "Be ye perfect like me—perfect as I am—namely, in spreading your bounties out upon those who do not like you." Read that command, especially, in the fifth chapter of Matthew. You that are perplexed about the divinity of Christ; you that do not understand the doctrine of Election or the doctrine of the Trinity; you that are very much troubled on the subject of the atonement, and the relations of vicarious suffering to everlasting justice; you who are at a loss to understand the subject of affection as it relates to God—here is a doctrine that is a great deal harder than any of those. It is in the forty-fourth verse of this chapter. It is the language of your Master:

"I say unto you, Love your enemies."

You say, "How can I love a man who is wicked?" That is your own lookout. Here is the passage. "How can I love hatefulness?" God loves hateful men—not hateful*ness*.

"Love your enemies."

You say, "I will love them when they be good." But that is your version, not God's.

"Love your enemies."

We are to feel toward them just as the spring feels toward frozen ground, when it comes from the south, warm, moist, generous, and unlocking, and, by that which it brings from the Equator, releases the frigid north from its thrall and its death. Out of your warm

life breathe that upon your enemies which shall bring them to their true selves. They are human beings; they are sentient; they are immortal; and you stand over against this command, laid upon you as the price of your fealty to God.

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you."

"He did say that of me, did he? Well, I will remember it. It will not be long before I get a chance to pay that back to him; and then he will see what it is to say such things about me." That is the way most of us Christians fulfill the command of God. "Did he say that? I know something about him; and you see if I do not make it tell." That is what we say; but God says,

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you."

It is very hard for a man to curse a great while into the heart of a blessing; and if you will go on blessing and blessing and blessing men who curse you, it will not be long before you will find that they cannot curse. The cure for cursing is blessing.

"Do good to them that hate you."

Not once, not twice, but a steady stream.

"Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

That is, pray for men who are saying all manner of little mean things about you; men who are snapping at you, pinching you, jabbing you, taking every advantage of you, following you up, morning, noon, and night—always doing it, here, there and everywhere. When they have done all they can against you, what have you a right to do with them? Kill them? Pray for them!

There, my friends, men and women, is a Christianity that you will find it harder to practice than all that is in creeds or confessions of faith. There is no mystery like the mystery of the human heart. And when you undertake to live this doctrine, you will say that it is the hardest thing to live in the New Testament. When you can say in truth, before God, "I do love my enemies, I do bless those that curse me, and I do good to them that hate me, and pray for them which despitefully use me and persecute me," you will not need anybody to teach you the nature of God. He will be in you, and will dwell in you, and your own spirit will interpret all things.

We are to pray, not only for those who are near to us and dear to us, and our fellow men in trouble, and our enemies, but also for those who are in representative positions and under temptations, as well as weighed down by the labors and cares of office. I am afraid that in our land the spirit of democracy has run to such excess that veneration and benevolence and humanity are almost gone. We are accustomed to think of officers as the favored of the people; as persons placed in high positions for honor or support. We are accustomed to think that we may say what we please about them, and

do what we please to them. How seldom do we find Christian churches and households and individual hearts bearing these men's burdens—praying for the judge; for the lawyer; for dynasties; for representatives in the legislature or in congress; for Governors; for the President, and the members of the Government associated with him! We inveigh against them, but we do not pray for them. We hold them up to censure. We judge them severely, and unsympathetically. If they are of our party, we defend them; if they are not, we condemn them. We scarcely pretend to do justice. It is a partisan, political matter. And yet, if there be anything laid down explicitly in the Bible, it is that we are to pray for all who are in authority—for kings and magistrates; for all that bear rule. I think that if we prayed more for them, the effect would be most salutary. That is to say, in a nation which professes to be Christian, as does this; in a nation filled with churches, like ours, if the hearts of the great mass of Christian men were once a week drawn up before God, in sincere, devout, earnest, sympathetic prayer for all in authority, I think that directly and indirectly there would be exerted an influence on these men, and that they would be more honorable men than they now are. We have had the most lamentable instances of the deterioration and corruption of magistrates; and it seems to me that among other causes is the fact that Christian men do not enough bear them up in the arms of their faith; that they are not prayed for as they ought to be.

Once more. We cannot fulfill the spirit nor the letter of this command if we pray only for our own sect. We are to pray for all men, good or bad, high or low, in authority or out of authority, and for all Christian men. We do pray for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ "according to our faith and order." That is the modern phrase. It is supposed that when the Methodist prays, he prays for all God's good Methodists; that when the Presbyterian prays, he prays for all good Presbyterians; that when the Congregationalist prays, he prays for all those who adopt that good form of church government which the Congregationalists have adopted; and that when the Baptist prays, he prays for all good Baptist Christians. It is natural that one's sympathy should be strongest toward those who are of his own denomination; and I do not say that you should not pray more for your own denomination than for any other; but while you do that, you ought not to forget that God has other sheep than those which are in your flock. So far from feeling sorry, I rejoice when I see good men in other denominations. I rejoice exceedingly when I find better men than I expect in any denomination. I rejoice when I find in the Roman Catholic Church men

of education and refinement and eminent piety. When among the Roman Catholics, whom I was taught to regard as the scales of the great dragon, almost, I find sincere, simple, sweet, humble, devout, conscientious, good men, it gives me unfeigned gladness. I am always sorry to hear something bad that I do not expect about anybody. I am glad to hear about persons that I do not think well of something that makes me think better of them. I am always glad to hear of a denomination to which I do not belong, something which shall give me reason to think them to be better than I have been accustomed to suppose they were.

Now, if we were taught, not to look suspiciously upon those of other denominations besides our own; if we were taught to tolerate and sympathize with those who differ from us in belief; if we were taught to bear up in our thoughts those who have erred from the faith with a spirit of benevolence and kindness; if we were taught to pray for those who are snared in the meshes of false systems; if we were taught to make supplication even in behalf of those who not only oppose our doctrine, but hinder our Christian labors, do not you suppose we should begin to see the workings of that charity out of which the millennial day is to come? We never shall come together in the matter of church government or creeds. If there is to be a unity of the people of God on earth, so that at last there shall be one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and substantially one brotherhood of Christians, it will be because the hearts of Christian men so flow to each other that common allegiance to the Saviour will be more to them than all the special differences which separate them.

In every church, it seems to me, there should be prayer made, not only for the unfortunate ones—those who do not belong to the Church—but for our fellow-Christians everywhere, and of every name, as though we believed that God looks upon them with the same favor with which he looks upon us. Thus we should draw into the discordant camp of theology and ecclesiasticism elements of peace which, growing, shall by and by bring in the last great day.

Christian brethren, I leave with you this thought, of *prayer for others*, which comes very near to your households; which tends to bring you into sympathy with all those who stand in Christian fellowship with you, to reveal your duties, and by the same light to reveal your deficiencies; to unite the churches; to so harmonize discordant denominations, that his prayer may be fulfilled who prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

So we shall bring to pass that great desire of the soul of Jesus

—the unity of the children of faith—if, in sympathy, and with all true prayer, we are accustomed to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men."

Now we invite all those who feel united together by this common bond of their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ; all who are conscious of their weakness and sinfulness; all who feel that this sinfulness and this weakness need divine succor and divine love; all who can heartily receive the help of Jesus Christ to save them from their sins; all who are willing to have Jesus for their Leader in the pursuit of a holy life—I invite all such, whether they be members of the Church or not, to partake of the Lord's Supper with us. This invitation which I give is sometimes misapprehended, as if I asked everybody to come to the Lord's Supper. I do not. If there be members of the Church who do not care for religion, and only come because it is custom, I do not invite them. If there be those who are living, and are determined to live, in the indulgence of wrong and wicked feelings, I say to them, You are not fit to come. But if there be those who are out of the Church, and who have yearned to live a godly life, and who are purposed to do it, them I invite. In other words, I make the invitation rest on moral, and not on ecclesiastical grounds. I say that every one who knows himself to be sinful, and who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as a Healer, and is willing to avow it openly, and take the help that comes from this simple ordinance, I invite, without any regard to ecclesiastical considerations. I invite you on the broad ground that Jesus came to save sinners, and that if you recognize him as your Saviour, you are entitled to come. All that need, come on that ground.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

We thank thee, our Father, that we are not left to walk alone in life, without sympathy, without help, in our wants, in our weakness, to be cast down with none to succor us. We thank thee that thou hast gathered us together in bands and families where the strong help the weak, and where love is the rule of justice. We thank thee that thou hast grouped us together in our higher relations; that all those who are seeking the love of God and the fellowship of eternal life are brought into sweet household relations, and are as brothers and sisters seeking each other's welfare, and striving to uphold, to comfort, to encourage, to help each other in the conflicts of life, in this earthly pilgrimage, so that when any are cast down, it shall be with them as it is with the wounded in battle who are borne away by loving hands for healing.

We thank thee for the ministration of the household of faith, and for all the offices of mercy which thou hast associated with it. We thank thee that thou hast gathered so many here who have walked in great comfort on earth, in full fellowship of labor, and suffering, and varied experiences. A great many of them thou hast called from the scene of their earthly toils. They rest from their labor, but their work continues. Still we remember their example. There be many who remember their counsel. Many remember their prayers, and feel yet the breath of their sympathy.

But multitudes of those who have been gathered here are yet upon the earth. We meet together from Sunday to Sunday, a household of faith, loving one another with that love with which we are beloved of God in Christ Jesus.

We thank thee that in the simplicity of this household thou art manifest, coming at morning, tarrying at evening, dwelling with us, and granting unto us all comfort and strength. Oh, that thou wouldst make thyself the Chief among us all, that we may be equal brethren; that there may be no strivings, no envyings, no jealousies; that each may esteem the others better than himself; that Jesus may be the one Master, and all the rest disciples alike of Christ!

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that as one and another are brought into the fellowship of the Gospel, and are joined to us in outward life and in inward sympathy, they may find the atmosphere around about them as of the summer; that they may thrive and be rooted and grounded in the faith, and that they may stretch forth their branches, and bring forth much fruit. May none come to be less men than they were. May they not be hindered, nor checked, nor restrained in anything that is noble and manly. May all that are gathered into this household of faith find that they have come to liberty; to a largeness toward God; to a largeness of heart toward their fellow men; to more joys which abide with them; to a longer life which stretches into the immortalities. Grant that they may here find rest, rejoicing, counsel, company, and all needed help. May we help one another along the way. And though we love one another, may we at times warn each other as we walk through dangerous paths.

Grant thy blessing, especially, to rest upon those who, this morning, have been publicly received into our midst. Wilt thou grant unto them the evidence of their acceptance with Jesus Christ. From day to day increase their faith, and their power to resist temptation. Endue them with all manliness. Make their hands strong to build themselves up in honesty, and virtue, and truth, and purity.

We pray that thou wilt grant that many more may be gathered in from

*Immediately following the reception of members into the church.

the unthinking, from the selfish, from the worldly, from those who are living only for themselves. May there be a better life of love, and more largeness of the Gospel of Christ implanted in many other hearts. And may they be gathered into the fellowship of the church, that they may walk in a nobler way in this life. Grant that they may have a divine ambition implanted in their souls.

We pray that thou wilt grant that those who are laboring for the enfranchisement of men, and for their education in spiritual things, may become luminous by the Divine Spirit which shall dwell in them evermore.

Bless our various Sunday-schools, and all our Bible-classes, and all the scholars therein that come from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from week-day to week-day, to receive instruction. We pray that those who teach them may be more earnest, more patient, more gentle, more full of sweet and attractive sympathy. May they perform their labors from generosity. May they forget what they are doing from day to day, and not look behind to take account of what they have done. May they in all their work look forward, remembering Christ, who, though rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich. And may they bestow themselves, as the greatest privilege of their life, upon those around about them, to do them good, in the hope of meeting them in the heavenly land.

We pray that all those who go out to seek for the wandering, to cheer those who are sick, and to look after the careless, for whom no man has cared hitherto, may carry with them the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be thou with them in their self-denial. Be with them in their hours of discouragement. May they sow seed abundantly, having faith that much will come up, even though much may be devoured by the fowls of the air.

Bless, we beseech of thee, the members of this church. May they be in thy care and keeping. Bless the wandering ones—those who have been sent out upon divine errands; those who are upon the sea and upon the land. Wherever they are, hold them in the hollow of thy hand. Grant that thy blessing may rest upon them all in their far-away places, and in their special needs and wants.

We pray that thy blessing may be with thy churches of every name today. Unite thy people. May thy church make itself manifest everywhere among men. And may men cleave to each other because they are men.

We pray that there may be liberty for all to seek their own good in their special ways; and that, walking by the use of divine instruments, we may be cheered with a common sympathy and a common love. We pray that all divisive influences may be weakened, and that all influences which tend to fellowship and communion may be augmented and strengthened.

May the light of truth shine abroad. We thank thee, not alone that it is reflected from the church, but that thou art causing all things to praise thee. We thank thee that thou art employing the very administration of governments, the very marshalling of armies, the very pursuits of commerce, for the accomplishment of thy purposes. We thank thee that all things are working together for good. We thank thee that thou art sanctifying all the influences which are spread abroad throughout the earth. May they conspire with the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ in bringing in that latter-day when all the earth shall be filled with thy salvation.

And now we pray that thou wilt be with us in the further services of the morning. Go with us to our homes. May the Spirit of the Lord's day abide with us through all the week. And so, from Sunday to Sunday, may we walk, until at last we are received into that rest which remains for the people of God.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

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